Applicant No.: 10/776,176
Amdt. dated May 28, 2005
Reply to Office action of Nov. 2, 2005

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheet of drawing includes changes to Fig. 1 and 10, we are include the plate26 which was explained in the specification of patent (see paragraph **[0099]**).

The Figure 11 was included, which is a detail of the adjusting of the transversal section for the dilution treatment chamber.

Attachment:

Amended Sheet
Added sheet

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The above amendments have been made to more clearly define the present invention in view of the cited prior art and to improve the wording.

In the specification and claims, the modifications better clarify the method and apparatus of the present invention, correct typographical and unintentional errors, and distinguish the present invention from others patents that were brought to the attention of the Applicant.

The applicant respectfully submits that no new subject matter has been added.

The structure of the application was reorganised, the initial structure was as follows:

Description: 1 apparatus for separation
2 method for separation
3 apparatus for mixing/treating
4 method for mixing/treating

Claims: 1 apparatus for separation
2 method for separation
3 apparatus for mixing/treating
4 method for mixing/treating

For this amended application, we agreed to group descriptions and claims for better comprehension and reflect the present as follows:

Specification 1 apparatus for separation and/or mixing and/or treatment
2 method for separation and/or mixing and/or treatment

Claims: 1 apparatus for separation and/or mixing and/or treatment
2 method for separation and/or mixing and/or treatment

Also, the "Summary of the Invention", "Brief description of the drawing", "Description of the preferences embodiments", "Description and method of apparatus in separation, and/or mixing, and/or treating" and "Uses" sections, have been amended to reflect the amended set of claims. The other following modifications were made to the specification (and the claims) to improve the idiom thereof and eliminate unintentional confusion between different parts where applicable.

The applicant respectfully believes that all of the above concerns are readily inferable from the specification and/or the drawings as originally filed. Accordingly, no new subject matter has been added to the specification of the present application.

In the drawings, the figure 11 illustrating the description originally filled has been introduced.

All apparatus/methods disclosed in prior art documents refer to divide particles/fluids stream in groups of particles by either using mechanical rotary devise and/or blowing, and/or sucking area of air thereon, in a open chamber and need to suck all the amount of blowing air entraining fines particles to be filtrated particulate out therefrom.

Accordingly, the applicant strongly believes that the apparatus/method of the present invention is new, involves and inventive step to solve a specific problem as having an industrial applicability; because using treatment fluid jet stream impact force produce by high speed pressure and also after having subjecting the mass of particle stream to a important dilution rate for a de-cohesion (masse/volume) to produce the separation, mixing or treatment separately or simultaneously.

To facilitate the examination in conformity of the amended application, the Applicant respectfully request that the Examiner considers the following comments:

- "High impact" is used in the application as originally filed to illustrate the fluid impact effect. In the amended application, this aspect is more clearly defined, as well as its uses and the relation with the speed of fluid and others aspects of the invention.

- "Jet" is used in the application as originally filed about the particle and fluid jet injected within the channel of the treatment chamber. The currently amended application further defines the uses of these jets in relation with the speed and impact produced thereby and the effect on the dilution and the processes of separation, mixing or treatment, and stream blowing.

- "Velocity" is used in the originally filed application, in relation to the speed of air, fluid or particle and these effects on the particle, dilution, acceleration, etc. In this currently amended application, we clarify the action of the pressure and jet stream which produces the impact force.

- "Force" is used in the originally filed application to represent the jet force. In the currently amended application, we better explain where the force came from and its action on the movement of particle.

- "Distance" is used in the originally filed application to collecting particle according the their masses and travel distance. In the currently amended application, we have represented the distance more clearly as a first and second distance and put it in relation with the jet stream and particles.

- "Pressure" is used in the originally filed application, to represent the differential pressure in the apparatus and in the dilution treatment chamber. We better explain in the amended Application this relation with the velocity and the force creating the high impact.

The Applicant respectfully submits that the current amendments have clarified the originally filed patent application and better define and explain the invention.

The Examiner rejected claims 1-7, 10 and 12-15 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Winkler, US Patent 339,723. The Examiner also rejected claims 1 and 8 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Eaches, US Patent 818,944. The Examiner further rejected claims 1 and 9 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Hukki, US Patent 3,720,307. The Examiner yet further rejected claims 1, 11, 12 and 15 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Parkinson, US Patent 1,348,043. Finally, the Examiner objected to claim 14 as being ambiguous.

Claims 1-15 have been cancelled. Therefore, the rejections of and objections to these claims no longer apply to this application. Claims 16-21 remain withdrawn.

New claim 22 includes the following limitation:

the diluting flow of fluid having a velocity and density such that the velocity pressure of the fluid produces a diluting impact force on the particles causing the particles to move in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid.

The Applicant respectfully submits that this limitation is not disclosed in any of the documents cited by the Examiner. To the contrary, in Eaches dust is entrained by air produced by fans, as seen from the arrow present in the Figure of the Patent and as stated by the Examiner on page 5 of his Office Action. Also, Parkinson clearly mentions that in the apparatus described in this document, particles are moved by being aspirated (for example, in page 2, second column, lines 85-92. Furthermore, the apparatus described in Hukki also

entrains fine particles, as mentioned in Columns 1, lines 60-65 and Column 2, lines 10-22. Finally, the apparatus described in Winkler moves particles by alternatively entraining the particles in alternating directions. This is performed by blowing and sucking air (Column 1, lines 7-8). Also, none of these documents mention a diluting flow of fluid as claimed.

The applicant respectfully submits that entraining particles of a desired size, as described in the four documents cited by the Examiner, is totally different from diluting particles by using a velocity pressure of the fluid to produce a diluting impact force. Indeed, the expression "entraining" suggests that the particles are moved through frictional forces (shear forces). These forces are very different from the impact forces claimed. In fact, frictional forces have a significant effect at Reynolds number that are different from the Reynolds numbers at which impact forces are produced. Another manner of seeing the difference between frictional forces and velocity pressures is that in the stress tensor describing the interaction between a fluid and a particle, velocity pressures are completely independent from shear stresses representing friction.

The Applicant further respectfully submits that velocity pressures produce effects that are qualitatively different from the effects produced by shear forces. As mentioned in the description (page 9 paragraph **[0015.B]**, page 11 paragraph **[0027]**, page 12 paragraph **[0029.B]**, page 18 paragraph **[0041] and** page 31 paragraph **[0079]**) relatively large quantities of matter may then be processed in a relatively short amount of time.

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Therefore, in view of the above, the Applicant respectfully submits that claim 22 is neither taught nor suggested by any of the documents cited by the Examiner and allowance of this claim is respectfully requested.

Claims 23-37 depend directly or indirectly from claim 22, and as such include all the limitations of this base claim. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully submits that claims 23-37 are neither taught nor suggested by any of the documents cited by the Examiner for reasons similar to those expressed hereinabove with respect to claim 22. Allowance of these claims is consequently also respectfully requested.

Claim 38 and claims 39-61 that depend thereon include the following limitation:

c. a nozzle for creating a jet stream

As mentioned in the specification, a jet stream is a high speed flow of air that operates at velocities sufficient for exerting velocity pressures onto particles. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully submits that claims 38-61 are neither taught nor suggested by any of the documents cited by the Examiner for reasons similar to those expressed hereinabove with respect to claim 22. Allowance of these claims is consequently also respectfully requested.

It is respectfully submitted that when the rejection of the claims be reviewed in light of Applicant's arguments, the invention without a doubt should be considered patentably distinguished over the currently applied references. It is now believed the above application is in order for Allowance and such action would be appreciated.

APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR [[~~SEPARATING/MIXING COMPONENTS OF PARTICLE STREAM~~]] PROCESSING A STREAM OF PARTICLES

[[~~PARTICLE/FLUIDS~~]]

[0001] This application claims priority on Canadian Patent Applications No. 2,421,246, filed on February 12, 2003, No. 2,419,451, filed on February 21, 2003, and No. 2,435,086, filed on July 18, 2003.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] [[~~The present invention generally relates to the separation and mixing of particles and, more specifically, to a dry particle stream separator/mixer and methods for separating particle streams into particle groups and for mixing/treating particle groups.~~]] The present invention is concerned with a method and an apparatus for processing a stream of particles.

2. Background Art

[0003] Previously known techniques and methods are currently used for the separation of aggregates into particle groups. For instance, gravity classifiers, inertial classifiers, centrifugal classifiers, and cyclone separators are well known and used technologies. Amongst other patents, Canadian Patent No. 2,257,674, issued on January 7, 2003 to Cordonnier et al., discloses an air classifier with centrifugal action. Canadian Patent Applications No. 2,068,935 (by Tyler et al.) and 2,294,829 (by Gruenwald) respectively describe an air separator and an air classification of water-bearing fruit and vegetable ingredients for peel and seed removal and size discrimination.

[0004] Another known separation method is gravity separation by elutriation. In this process, a predetermined particle group is lifted by an airflow against the force of

gravity. A finer particle [[~~group~~]] is collected by an upwardly positioned collector, whereas coarser particles overcome the airflow to be collected at a downwardly positioned collector. The amount and velocity of air has a direct effect on the particle group that is collected by the upwardly positioned collector.

[0004.A]. One of the existent technologies, described in U.S. patents No. 2,003,899 and No. 5,259,510, uses a large volume of blown and sucked air to collect the particles to be filtered. Several steps are performed to break down the particle stream. Some steps use deflectors and other steps entrain particles with blown or sucked air. Steps wherein air is blown to entrain the particles according to their different masses and allow to collect them further along in a filtration equipment. The sucked air is used to collect the volume of blown air and the entrained particle that are in suspension therein. This method uses relatively large volumes of air for lower-mass particles.

~~[0005]~~ [[~~This previously described method is a dry process, in that the fluid used for the separation is not in a liquid phase. Such systems are advantageous in that no liquid is polluted in the separation process. The cleaning of liquids after particle separation is a costly process, and this results in a clear cost efficiency advantage for dry processes.~~]]

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0005] It is therefore an aim of the present invention ~~to~~ provides a novel apparatus and method for [[~~separating~~]] processing a stream of ~~a~~ particles [[~~stream into particle groups~~]].

[0006] It is a further aim of the present invention ~~to~~ causes a dilution of a particle stream and is related to the enhancement of different processes of the separation and/or mixing, and/or treating of the different particle stream

components having different masses, separately and/or simultaneously [[~~into particle groups~~]].

[0007] It is a further aim of the present invention ~~to~~ provides a novel apparatus and method for separating, mixing, and treating different components of a particle stream having different masses separately and/or simultaneously [[~~groups into a particle stream~~]].

[0008] It is a further aim of the present invention is related to an apparatus [[~~that the apparatuses~~]] for separating a particle stream into different particle groups, and ~~for~~ mixing different particle groups into a particle stream ~~use~~ using minimum space and treatment fluid ~~air~~ volume so as to be cost and space efficient.

[0009] It is a further aim of the present invention ~~to~~ provides a novel apparatus and method for separating particle streams into particle groups and mixing, treating different particle groups having different masses.

~~[0010]~~ [[~~It is a further aim of the present invention to provide a novel method for mixing particle groups.~~]]

[0010] It is a further aim of the present invention to reduces a need for conventional dust collection systems.

[0011] A few factors are considered in creating separation, mixing or treating equipment. For instance, it is desired that the amount of [[~~fluid~~]] treatment fluid used in [[~~the process~~]] these processes be kept low. [[~~The fluid that is used for the separation will lose the particles it carries in suspension by settling~~]].

[0011.A]. In a broad aspect, the invention provides a method for processing a stream of particles, the stream of particles flowing substantially along a stream flow direction. The method comprises directing a diluting flow of fluid towards the stream of particles, the diluting flow of fluid flowing substantially along a diluting flow of fluid direction, the diluting flow of fluid having a velocity and density creating

a jet stream such that the velocity pressure of the fluid produces a diluting impact force on the particles causing the particles to move in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid.

[0011.B]. In some embodiments of the invention, the method includes directing a diluting flow of fluid towards the stream of particles, the diluting flow of fluid flowing substantially along a diluting flow of fluid direction, the diluting flow of fluid having a velocity and density such that the fluid produces a diluting impact force on the particles causing the particles to move over a first distance in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid while the fluid produces the separating impact force and to move over a second distance in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid after the fluid has produced the diluting impact force, the diluting impact force being of a magnitude and a duration such that:

[0011.C]. - the particles are substantially separated from each other by the diluting flow of fluid; and

[0011.D]. - the second distance is substantially larger than the first distance.

[0011.E]. For example, the diluting flow of fluid has a relatively high velocity pressure producing relatively high impact jet stream.

[0011.F]. In another broad aspect, the invention provides an apparatus for processing a stream of particles. The apparatus comprising:

[0011.G]. - a substantially upstanding dilution treatment chamber, the dilution treatment chamber defining an upper chamber end and an opposed lower chamber end, the dilution treatment chamber having a chamber passageway extending between the upper and lower chamber ends;

[0011.H]. - a source of compressed fluid; and

[0011.I]. - a nozzle 14, for creating a jet stream, the nozzle including

[0011.J]. - a nozzle inlet 40, in fluid communication with the source of compressed fluid;

[0011.K]. - a nozzle outlet 41, in fluid communication with the chamber passageway for releasing the jet stream into the chamber passageway;

[0011.L]. - a nozzle passageway 43, extending between the nozzle inlet and the nozzle outlet.

[0011.M]. For the purpose of this description, the term particle applies both to solid particles and to fluid droplets. Therefore, the above-described method and apparatus are both applicable to the processing of liquids.

[0011.N]. Also, for the purpose of this description, the term processing refers to any process performed on the particles. Examples of such processes include mixing, separating and treating the particles.

~~[0012]~~ [[~~Also, the separation is a sub-process of larger processes, and is often performed in limited space areas with the larger process. It is therefore desired to keep the dry-separation equipment as space efficient as possible.~~]]

[0012] [[~~Therefore,~~]] For example, and non-limitingly, in accordance with the present invention, there is provided an apparatus for separating different components of a particle stream or mixing or treating the same, or any combination thereof [[~~into particle groups;~~]]. The apparatus [[~~comprising~~]] includes a dilution treatment chamber 12, defining ~~an~~ for instance a parallelepipedic upstanding passageway [[~~channel~~]] 20, having a particle stream inlet 21, at a top end, and a dilution treatment chamber outlet 22, [[~~first particle group outlet~~]] at a bottom end, the dilution treatment chamber 12, [[~~channel~~]] being adapted to receive a particle stream at the [[~~particle~~]] inlet 21, such that the particle stream falls toward the dilution treatment chamber

[[~~first particle group~~]] outlet 22; a transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13, adjacent to the dilution treatment chamber 12, and defining a transfer chamber 13, adapted to receive a part or all the selected components separated from the particle stream; [[~~second particle group;~~]] a transfer chamber 13, sharing a wall 23, with the dilution treatment chamber 12; at least one transfer aperture 24, [[~~second particle group outlet~~]] laterally positioned with respect [[~~to the channel~~]] to ~~of~~ the dilution treatment chamber 12, and allowing [[~~fluid~~]] communication between the dilution treatment [[~~transfer~~]] chamber 12, and the transfer chamber [[~~channel~~]] 13; a distributor 14, in passageway the dilution treatment chamber 12, or a at least one nozzle 14, for creating the impact force produce by treatment fluid pressure-jet stream action [[~~channel~~]] situated between the particle stream inlet 25, and ~~the~~ at least one transfer aperture 24, [[~~second particle group outlet for breaking down the particle stream~~]] for mixing and distributing the different components of the particle stream over a surface area of the dilution treatment chamber [[~~channel~~]] 12, and; at least one treatment fluid ~~flow~~ aperture in the dilution treatment chamber 12, and below the distributor 14, adapted to allow the projection of the [[~~create a~~]] treatment fluid jet stream [[~~fluid flow~~]] between the dilution treatment chamber 12, and the transfer chamber 13, [[~~and the channel so as to entrain a second particle group~~]] and through the particle stream, [[~~from the channel~~]] to project the selected components away through the transfer aperture 24, [[~~second particle group outlet to~~]] in the transfer chamber 13, and exiting through the transfer chamber outlet 31, with a part of particle stream [[~~first particle group~~]] remaining in the dilution treatment chamber 12, [[~~channel for~~]] and exiting through the dilution treatment chamber outlet 22, [[~~first particle group outlet~~]], the apparatus being adapted to be connected to a adjustable

positive pressure source to create the different rate of jets stream pressure effect [[~~fluid flow~~]].

[0013] [[~~Further~~]] In accordance with the present invention, there is also provided a method for separating different components having different masses of ~~a~~ particle stream into different groups [[~~particle groups~~]], or mixing or treating different components of particle comprising the steps of: i) spreading out [[~~breaking down~~]] the particle stream by subjecting the particle stream to a slide 50, for guiding and accelerating the stream in direction of to a deflector before inlet 21, of the dilution treatment chamber 12, [[~~lateral forces~~]]; ii) distributing a particle stream over a surface area of the dilution treatment chamber by subjecting the particle stream to a nozzle treatment fluid pressure effect, or a distributor 14, for horizontal dilution; iii) vertically diluting the particle stream by directing the particle stream in the dilution treatment chamber 12, to a falling condition accelerated by means of gravity; iv) projecting [[~~entraining a~~]] the different components of particle stream [[~~particle group away from a remainder of the particle stream by creating a~~]] by subjecting the particle stream to a treatment fluid [[~~flow of~~]] at predetermined [[~~magnitude~~]] or various velocity pressures through a nozzle 14, with adjustable orifice outlet 41, which produced the different pressure jet stream impact force related to the kinetic energy transformation creating a high impact. The treatment fluid impacts all or part of the different components depending of the adjustment of the fluid volume, velocity and pressure across the particle stream in said falling condition~~,~~. The impact forces are transmitted to the different components of the particle stream in order to move and project them across the surface area and within the volume of the dilution treatment chamber 12. The impact force increases the spacing between the particles. These impact force produce a relatively large mass dilution of the particles stream. These process dilute the particle masses

for a instantly dilution of the previous masses. The dilution allows projection of the different component of particle stream away from a remainder for the separation process and let the different groups of components exit and separate locations. The jet stream projects all the different components in all directions in the dilution treatment chamber for mixing. These processes may also use any suitable treatment fluid for treating the particle stream [[~~and v) collecting the particle group and the remainder of the particle stream at separate locations.~~]]

[0014] Still further in accordance with the present invention, there is provided an apparatus for at least one of mixing and treating particle and/or [[~~fluid~~]] stream, comprising a dilution treatment chamber 12, defining an upstanding passageway 20, [[~~channel~~]] having an inlet 21, at a top end, and an outlet 22, at a bottom end, the passageway 20, [[~~channel~~]] being adapted to receive said particle and/or fluid streams at the inlet such that said particle and/or streams fall toward the outlet; at least one treatment fluid ~~flow~~ aperture 25, in the dilution treatment chamber 12, adapted to create a generally lateral flow of at least one of a fluid and jet within the passageway 20, [[~~channel~~]] to create a turbulence in the passageway 20, [[~~channel~~]] for at least one of mixing said particle and/or [[~~fluid~~]] streams and treating said particle and/or fluid streams, whereby a mixture and/or treated matter will exit the passageway 20, [[~~channel~~]] at the outlet 22; and a positive pressure source connected to the fluid flow aperture to create the lateral flow of ~~the~~ at least one of the fluid and the particle with a jet stream having a high velocity pressure.

[0015] Still further in accordance with the present invention, there is provided a method for at least one of treating and mixing particle and/or fluid streams, comprising the steps of: i) vertically diluting particle and/or fluid streams by directing particle and/or fluid streams to a

falling condition; ii) creating a lateral flow of fluid and/or a particle jet stream with high velocity pressure across the particle and/or fluid streams in said falling condition for at least one of mixing the particle and/or fluid streams by the a turbulence resulting from the lateral flow of fluid and/or particle jet stream, and treating said particle and/or fluid with a treatment fluid [[~~streams~~]]; and iii) collecting the mixture and/or treated matter below the lateral flow.

[0015.A]. In some embodiments of the invention, the method and apparatus lets the particles decelerate, agglomerate and settle in the transfer chamber 13, and exiting by the transfer chamber outlet 31.

[0015.B]. Advantageously, the claimed apparatus is able to process relatively large quantities of particles relatively fast.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0016] Having thus generally described the nature of the invention, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings, showing by way of illustration a preferred embodiment thereof and in which:

[0017] Fig. 1 is a schematic view of an apparatus 10, for [[~~separating a particles~~]] processing a particle stream in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, and of a method for separating the particles stream;

[0018] Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the apparatus in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0019] Fig. 3 is a further perspective view of the apparatus of Fig. 1;

[0020] Fig. 4 is a perspective view of a nozzle to be used with the apparatus of the first embodiment;

[0021] Fig. 5 is a perspective view of the apparatus in accordance with a second embodiment of the present invention;

[0022] Fig. 6 is a perspective view of a lateral particle separator to be used with the apparatus of the second embodiment;

[0023] Fig. 7 is a perspective view of a recuperator tray of the apparatus;

[0024] Fig. 8 is a schematic view of an mechanical distributor impeller used to create horizontal dilution [[~~and separation~~]] of a particle stream in accordance with an alternative embodiment of the present invention;

[0025] Fig. 9 is a schematic view of a laterally reciprocating strainer in accordance with a further alternative embodiment of the present invention; and

[0026] Fig. 10 is a schematic view of an apparatus for separating particles stream in accordance with a still further alternative embodiment of the present invention.

[0026.A]. Fig. 11 is a schematic transversal section through the dilution treatment chamber 12, in order to clarify the details of the movable side wall of the passageway 20.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0027] It is pointed out that the present invention is associated with processing a stream of particles ~~the~~ for separating, ~~and~~ mixing or treating, or any combination thereof, the ~~of~~ different components having different properties of a particles stream. For example, the components have different masses. The term "particles stream" is broadly used herein to designate a different component mass of particles, granules, pellets, and other elements such as any kind of solids and/or fluids of different mass and volume gathered together. Various uses of the present invention are defined hereinafter, for which the components and/or elements ~~mass~~ that ~~is~~ are processed [[~~separated/mixed~~]] is referred to as particle stream

[[~~unless stated otherwise~~]]. Also, the present invention uses the high velocity pressure of a jet stream which contains a relatively large kinetic energy. This energy is transferred at least in part to particles stream components to move, distribute, project, and settle the different components of the particle stream. A jet stream is defined on a high impact speed air stream blowing and producing high energy in relatively short time exposure.

[0028] Referring to the drawings, and more particularly to Fig. 1, an apparatus for processing a stream of particles [[~~separating a particle stream into particle groups is~~]] generally shown at 10. The apparatus 10, shown in the drawings is a typical apparatus according to the invention. The reader skilled in the art will readily appreciate that many other geometric shapes and configurations are within the scope of the invention. The apparatus 10, has a substantially parallelepipedic dilution transfer chamber 12, a substantially parallelepipedic transfer chamber 13 adjacent to the dilution treatment chamber 12, sharing a wall 23, between the transfer chamber 13 and the dilution treatment chamber 12, [[~~has a dilution treatment chamber 12, a transfer casing 13 adjacent to the dilution treatment chamber 12,~~]] a nozzles 14 serially mounted on the dilution treatment chamber 12, and a pretreatment module 15. It is pointed out that the nozzles 14 are affixed with letters in various figures, whereby reference to the nozzles 14 will relate to all nozzles (e.g., nozzles 14A, 14B and 14C), while reference to a specific one of the nozzles will include an affixed letter.

[0029] The dilution treatment chamber 12 performs a dilution of a particle stream by producing a de-cohesion of the different component gathered together in the particle stream with a treatment fluid impact force. The treatment fluid is a fluid that is involved in the separation, mixing or any other suitable treatment of the particle stream. The impact force is created by a jet stream of a fluid. More

specifically, the impact force is created by a high velocity pressure of the fluid exerted on the particles, which is the only component of the stress tensor describing the fluid/particle interaction that may produce an impact. The other non-zero components of this stress tensor represent frictional forces between the fluid and the particles. In some embodiments of the invention, the treatment fluid impact force creates a relatively large distance between the particles. The extent to which the particles are diluted on many parameters. For example, the following parameters influence the dilution: 1) surface area of the dilution treatment chamber12; 2) adjustment of the jet stream impact force; 3) number of stage of projection of the treatment fluid; 4) length of the dilution treatment chamber 12, among others. All these parameters determine the de-cohesion rate between each component and the dilution of the particle stream masses.

[0029.A]. The nozzle jet stream and the action of gravity~~,~~ [[~~and host~~]] perform a step of separation, and/or mixing and/or treatment of the different components of the particle stream [[~~into particle groups~~]].

[0029.B]. High impact is created by a high speed movement with a very short time exposure creating the velocity pressure jet stream. Jet stream is defined an a high impact speed air stream blowing and having high kinetic energy. The high impact force is proportional with the square of the velocity of the treatment fluid. For example, to obtain one hundred Newton forces with high velocity pressure, you will use one mass of treatment fluid by ten speed squares in comparison of hundred mass of treatment fluid by one speed square. This example prove that the speed of the treatment fluid is the most important factor to create the force.

[0029.C]. One other step to increase the dilution rate of the particle fluid stream is performed when the stream reaches the inlet of the passageway 20, of the dilution treatment

chamber 12. A distributor 14, one or more nozzles 14, or both then dilute many times the previous mass concentration of the particle fluid stream. In embodiments of the invention wherein a nozzle 14, is present, the nozzle creates a treatment fluid jet stream, which in turn creates an impact force through the action of the high velocity pressure of the treatment fluid. As described in further details in this document, a relatively large high kinetic energy is thereby transferred to the components of the particle fluid stream to move the components for distributing the particle fluid stream on the cross section area of the dilution treatment chamber. These processes dilute many times the mass concentration of the particle fluid stream.

[0029.D]. After this step, the particle stream accelerates as it falls through the passageway 20, of the dilution treatment chamber 12. This further multiplicate the dilution of the particles stream to obtain a dilution of the particles stream suitable for the next processes.

[0029.E]. The dilution achieved is related to the length of the passageway 20, and the dilution treatment chamber 12. This length allows for increasing the previous speed of the particle fluid stream, which is accelerating under the influence of gravity. Since the particle stream accelerates, mass conservation requires that the particle stream be diluted. This multiplication of the dilution is related on the speed up to which the particle stream is accelerated. The length of the dilution treatment chamber 12, and the location of the nozzles 14, are selected such that a dilution factor suitable to achieve successfully the separation, mixing or treatment to perform is obtained. After this step, the particle stream reaches at least one other nozzle that also produces a treatment fluid jet stream impact force with a high velocity pressure impacting through the particle stream in the dilution treatment chamber 12, to move the particle or fluid. The total distance over which the particles are moved depends on the masses of the different

components of the particle stream and the magnitude of the impact force.

[0029.F]. At this stage, the particle stream has been diluted many times and its speed has been increased many times. The particles contain relatively large amounts of kinetic energy because of their relatively high speeds. Therefore, the velocity pressure with the high speed produced by a nozzle 14, is set for creating a relatively high impact force to move the particle stream over a first and also a second distance in transversally direction of the particle fluid steam in the falling direction. To perform this high impact force action, which is related to the square of the speed at the outlet 41, of the nozzle 14, by the mass of the treatment fluid, this method uses a relatively small amount of treatment fluid having a relatively high speed. The treatment fluid is then able to move laterally at least a portion of the particle stream without floating and entraining big amounts of air with the particle.

[0029.G]. The treatment fluid jet stream speed decreases faster than the speed of the particles that have been impacted by the treatment fluid due to the higher inertia of the particles. This causes the particles stream to move over a first and second distance due to ballistic effects, the total of which is relatively higher than a distance over which the treatment fluid moves. The velocity pressure and the speed of the treatment fluid create relatively large effects with a relatively small volume of the treatment fluid.

[0030] The transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13 is in fluid communication with the dilution treatment chamber 12 and receives ~~a~~ selected components groups of particle stream [[~~group~~]] and a [[~~separated from the~~]] remainder of the particle stream in the dilution treatment chamber 12.

[0031] The nozzles 14 are used to create the dilution of the particle stream in the dilution treatment chamber 12 and

to project a jet stream [[~~inject fluid~~]] (to be discussed hereinafter) that distributes, mixes, treats or separates [[~~which breaks down~~]] the different components of [[~~mass of~~]] particle stream [[~~and/or enhance the dilution of the particles stream in the dilution treatment chamber 12~~]]. Moreover, the nozzles 14 are used to project the treatment fluid in creating a [[~~inject fluid~~]] jet stream at different rate and velocity pressure which [[~~separates~~]] selects the type of process, by projecting away from a remainder for separating, in all directions the different components for mixing, by injecting the treatment fluid for treating the different components of particle stream [[~~into the particle groups~~]]. All these processes may be performed sequentially or simultaneously, using one or a plurality of nozzles for separate or simultaneous processing.

[0032] The pretreatment module 15 is used to guide [[~~and accelerate~~]] and spread out the particle stream toward the dilution treatment chamber 12, such that the particle stream will have predetermined ~~some~~ velocity. The velocity will cause a [[~~horizontal~~]] dilution of the particle stream.

DILUTION TREATMENT CHAMBER 12

[0033] Referring concurrently to Figs. 1, 2 and 3, the typically parallelepipedic dilution treatment chamber 12 is shown having an upstanding elongated shape, and defines a substantially vertical passageway [[~~channel~~]] 20 of substantially rectangular cross-section. Although a rectangular cross-section is described, any other suitable cross-section shapes are contemplated. The passageway [[~~channel~~]] 20 has an inlet 21 at a top end thereof and an outlet 22 at a bottom end thereof. The dilution treatment chamber 12 shares a wall 23 with the preferably parallelepipedic transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13. Transfer apertures [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24, positioned opposite the treatment fluids aperture 25, are provided in the wall 23, between [[~~such that~~]] the dilution treatment chamber 12 and

the transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13, [[~~are in fluid communication~~]]. Moreover, the dilution treatment chamber 12 may vary in cross-sectional dimensions. For instance, appropriate translating mechanisms may be provided so as to increase/decrease a length or width of the cross-section parameters of the dilution treatment chamber 12.

[0034] The dilution treatment chamber 12 also has treatment fluid pressure-differential apertures 25 (herein three apertures, i.e., treatment fluid ~~flow~~ apertures), two of which are horizontally positioned opposite the transfer aperture [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24 in the wall 23, between the dilution and transfer chamber.

TRANSFER CHAMBER [[~~CASING~~]] 13

[0035] Referring concurrently to Figs. 1, 2 and 3, the transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13 defines an inner transfer chamber 30. The inner transfer chamber 30 has a funnel-shaped outlet 31 at a bottom end thereof, so as to collect selected components of particle stream [[~~a particle group in suspension~~]] and allow deceleration and mass reconcentration of the components for settling in the transfer chamber ~~30~~ 13.

[0036] Referring to Fig. 5, a lateral particle separator 60, in accordance with another embodiment of the present invention, is received in the inner transfer chamber 30 of the transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13. The lateral particle separator 60 will be described in further detail hereinafter, and is used to cause a further particle group separation.

NOZZLE 14

[0037] Referring concurrently to Figs 1, 2 and 3, the nozzle 14B and 14C are positioned opposite the transfer aperture [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24 of the dilution treatment chamber 12. The nozzle 14, ~~in~~ may take various geometric shape and configurations. For instance, the nozzle [[~~a preferred configuration;~~]] are connected to a pressure source so as to produce [[~~inject~~]] a treatment fluid jet stream

[[~~gaseous~~]] (e.g. of any kind of elements) [[~~fluid (e.g., air or any other suitable gas, whereby reference will be made non-restrictively hereinafter to air or gaseous fluid)~~]] into the passageway [[~~channel 20~~]] of the dilution treatment chamber 12. For example, and non-limitingly, the fluid includes air or any other suitable gas.

[0038] Referring to Fig. 4, one of the nozzle 14 is illustrated in greater detail. The nozzle 14 has an inlet 40, by which it is connected to a pressure source, and an outlet 41 of elongated [[~~rectangular~~]] shape. The nozzle 14 has a diffusing divergent/convergent body 42 between the inlet 40 and the outlet 41.

[0039] In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the diffusing body 42 has an accumulator portion 43 connected to the inlet 40, and convergent tapered diffusing sectors 44 between the accumulator portion 43 and the outlet 41. The diffusing sectors 44 are used in order to create a substantially uniform diffusion of treatment fluid ~~air~~ out of each of the nozzle 14.

[0040] A gate 45 is displaceable vertically for the adjustment of the height of the outlet and surface area 41. A connection flange 46 is used to secure the nozzle 14 to the dilution treatment chamber 12 opposite the treatment fluid [[~~pressure differential~~]] apertures 25. It is also seen in Figs. 2 and 3 that the gate 45 can be accessed from an exterior of the apparatus 10, thereby enabling the rapid adjustment of the outlet size of the nozzle 14 from an exterior of the apparatus 10.

[0040.A]. Displacement of the gate 45 controls, at least in part, the rate and velocity of the treatment fluid so that the velocity of the treatment fluid is a predetermined velocity. The predetermined velocity controls at least in part the predetermined impact force to achieve a predetermined processing of the stream of particles. Other parameters of the apparatus 10 are also selectable so as to

adjust the treatment fluid to obtain a predetermined impact force.

[0041] The above-described configuration of the nozzle 14 enables a high-pressure, low-volume output of treatment fluid [[~~gaseous fluid~~]] into the dilution treatment chamber 12 to produce a high impact ~~on~~ which is created by a high velocity pressure jet [[~~the particle~~]] stream (e.g. moving at a relatively fast rate with short time exposure) with a relatively large kinetic energy, this energy being transferred at least in part to the particles for projecting the particles at different distances depending of their masses and other characteristics.

[0041.A]. In other words, a stream of particles flowing substantially along a stream flow direction is diluted by a treatment fluid in the form of a diluting flow of fluid directed towards the stream of particles, the diluting flow of fluid flowing substantially along a diluting flow of fluid direction.

[0041.B]. The diluting flow of fluid has a velocity and density such that the fluid produces a high impact with a diluting impact force on the particles causing the particles to move over a first distance in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid while the fluid produces the diluting impact force and to move over a second distance in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid after the fluid has produced the diluting impact force. The diluting impact force is of a magnitude and duration such that the particles are substantially separated from each other by the diluting flow of fluid the second distance is substantially larger than the first distance.

[0041.C]. In some embodiments of the invention, the movement of at least some of the particles caused by the diluting flow of fluid is such that the treatment fluid jet stream speed decreases faster than the speed of the particles that have

been impacted by the treatment fluid due to the higher inertia of the particles. In other embodiments of the invention, the high impact is such that the second distance is larger than the first distance.

[0042] Accordingly, the output of treatment fluid jet stream [[~~gaseous fluid~~]] will decelerate at a high rate, and shut down rapidly in accordance with the distance, so as to project [[~~a entrain~~]] in some instances described hereinafter given selected particle [[~~group~~]] out of the dilution treatment chamber 12, for separation and to avoid creating [[~~enhancing~~]] turbulence in the transfer chamber 13. [[~~Such turbulence would slow down the settling process in the transfer chamber 30, for instance, if the apparatus 10 were used for classifying particle groups~~]]. Also the treatment fluid is used for enhancing different processes of mixing and treating the different components of particle stream by impacting and projecting them in all directions in the dilution treatment chamber.

PRETREATMENT MODULE 15

[0043] Referring concurrently to Figs. 1, 2 and 3, the pretreatment module 15 is connected to the [[~~positioned at the~~]] inlet 21 of the dilution treatment chamber 12. The pretreatment module 15 conveys the particle stream [[~~from a particle stream source, such as conveyor C~~]], to the inlet 21 of the dilution treatment chamber 12. More specifically, the pretreatment module 15 will be used to produce specific passageway inlet conditions of the [[~~for the~~]] particle stream.

[0044] In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the pretreatment module 15 has a slide 50, sloping downwardly towards the inlet 21 of the dilution treatment chamber 12. A deflector 51 is positioned between the slide 50 and the inlet 21 of the passageway [[~~channel~~]] 20. The deflector 51 has a generally horizontal launch surface, but may also be oriented otherwise. As seen in Figs. 2 and 3, the slide 50 tapers

towards the inlet 21 of the dilution treatment chamber 12, so as to have an outlet 22, width generally equal to the inlet 21, width of the passageway [[~~channel~~]] 20 of the dilution treatment chamber 12. The slide 50 is preferably provided with guiding rails 52 for guiding the particle stream (Figs. 2 and 3). The particle stream reaching the slide 50 is preferably uniformly distributed toward the inlet 21 of the dilution treatment chamber 12, [[~~and the guiding rails 52 are provided to this effect~~]].

[0045] A further slide 53 is optionally provided above the slide 50 so as to dampen the fall of the particle stream from the conveyor C. The slide 53 will absorb a portion of the downward force, and will absorb the lateral velocity transmitted from the conveyor C to the particle stream, such that the particle stream reaches the dilution treatment chamber 12 at predetermined velocity parameters.

[0046] It is contemplated to provide various geometries configuration to the pretreatment module 15. For instance, the slide 50 is herein illustrated as being generally a flat, inclined surface. However, it is contemplated to provide the slide 50 with a downwardly-tapered frusto conical shape, [[~~whose smallest cross-section would meet the inlet 21 of the dilution treatment chamber 12~~]]. Moreover, for such an embodiment, the slide 53 preferably has an upright conical shape.

THE OPERATION OF THE APPARATUS IN SEPARATION, MIXING AND TREATING

[0047] The apparatus 10, can process simultaneously or separately the particle stream for separation, mixing, or treatment. Now that the various components of the apparatus 10 have been described, the processing operation of a stream of particles [[~~a separation operation~~]] of the apparatus 10 is set forth.

[0048] Referring concurrently to Figs. 1, 2 and 3, a particle stream is fed by the conveyor C to the apparatus 10. The particle stream has a vertical [[~~lateral~~]] velocity and will accelerate downwardly when leaving the conveyor C due to gravitational forces.

[0049] The slide 53 will absorb a portion of the downward force of the particle stream, and stop the lateral velocity of the particle stream that had been transferred to the particle stream by the action of the conveyor C. The [[~~mass of~~]] particle stream is directed by the slide 53 toward the slide 50 of the pretreatment module 15, at generally predetermined velocity conditions.

[0050] Upon reaching the slide 50, the particle stream will be guided by the guiding rails 52 so as to be conveyed uniformly towards the dilution treatment chamber 12 as a result of the downward slope of the slide 50. The downward slope of the slide 50 will cause the particle stream to accelerate.

[0051] The deflector 51, having a launch surface, will deflect the particle stream so as to spread out [[~~initiate a break-up of~~]] the [[~~mass of~~]] particles stream. A [[~~lateral~~]] dilution will be the result of the deflection of the particle stream by the deflector 51. Accordingly, the particle stream will reach the dilution treatment chamber 12, having been subjected to a ~~mass~~ dispersion for the next dilution by the treatment fluid velocity pressure produce with the nozzle 14, or with the distributor 14. Also the pre-treatment module are use for fluids stream [[~~break-up and to a horizontal dilution.~~]]

[0051.A]. The particle stream then fall in the dilution treatment chamber for horizontal dilution by a distributor and/or a nozzle with additional multiplication of dilution cause by vertical gravity force acceleration and plurality of nozzles of the particle stream and more specifically, creating space between component for a relatively large

dilution of mass/volume and a relatively large de-cohesion of the different components of particle stream.

~~[0052]~~ [[~~The particles stream then falls in the channel 20 of the dilution treatment chamber 12. The gravity will cause a vertical dilution of the particle stream.~~]]

[0052] A first one of the nozzles 14, namely nozzle 14A, will project a treatment fluid jet stream [[~~inject air~~]] within the passageway [[~~channel~~]] 20 of the dilution treatment chamber 12 so as to cause a de-cohesion of the component and a mixing and distribution the different components of the particle stream over the cross-sectional area of the dilution treatment chamber [[~~break up of the mass of particle stream into particle groups (i.e., breaking down the mass of particle stream)~~]] and [[~~spread out,~~]] dilute and~~/or~~ creating space between the particles ~~groups~~. [[~~This nozzle 14A is also referred to as a distributor, as it will be distributing the particle stream over a surface area of the channel 20.~~]] As an alternative to a nozzle 14, a distributors 14, [[~~the apparatus 10~~]] may be provided with vibrating strainers, impellers, or the like, as will be illustrated hereinafter.

[0053] The particle stream, having been subjected to a horizontal and a vertical dilution for a maximum de-cohesion of the different component before the next step of the treatment which continuing the de-cohesion in the same time of processing the treatment, the particle stream now subjected to a relatively large de-cohesion creating a dilution [[~~(i.e., break up or distribution),~~]] will be crossing a [[~~horizontal flow~~]] treatment fluid jet stream [[~~of air~~]] substantially perpendicular to the particle stream in said falling direction projected [[~~as injected~~]] by [[~~the second~~]] at least one others nozzle 14B, and the optional third nozzle 14C. The nozzles 14B and 14C [[~~inject~~]] project ~~air~~ treatment fluid, at a predetermined or variable pressure effect through the treatment fluid aperture 25, which are

positioned opposite the transfer aperture [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24, such that the treatment fluid jet stream ~~air~~ will project the selected components of particle stream in the dilution treatment chamber [[~~carry the finer particle group~~]] through the particle stream and/or out of the dilution treatment chamber 12, [[~~channel 20,~~]] by the opening through the transfer aperture [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24, ~~and~~ into the [[~~inner~~]] transfer chamber [[~~of the transfer casing~~]] 13, with ~~in~~ a high ratio of particle treatment fluid [[~~to air~~]] concentration. The projected treatment fluid [[~~air injected~~]] by the nozzles 14 is at the predetermined pressure, such ~~that~~ the other particles will not be projected out and remain in the particle stream depending. In other words, some particles are projected over a larger distance, which creates a separation of these particles from other particles present in the stream of particles [[~~coarse particle group will not be entrained out of the channel 20 by the air flow~~]]. The dilution that has taken place previously is an important factor in the different processes of separation, mixing or treating [[~~of the fine particles from the coarse particles~~]]. The magnitude of the pressure of treatment fluid projected [[~~air injection~~]] will have a direct effect on the particles being withdrawn from the particle stream in the dilution treatment chamber [[~~channel~~]] 20. It is pointed out that the vertical distance from the inlet 21 to the nozzle 14B is an important [[~~essential~~]] factor in diluting the particle stream to facilitate the subsequent [[~~separation~~]] processes [[~~of the particle groups~~]] so as to increase the contact with the treatment fluid [[~~fluid/particle contact~~]].

[0054] Although plurality of [[~~three~~]] nozzles (namely 14A, 14B and 14C) are described, the number of nozzles 14 is variable according to the present invention. The apparatus 10 is operative with a single nozzle 14 including [[~~opposite an~~]] a treatment fluid aperture 25, but a plurality of

nozzles 14 may be serially added on the dilution treatment chamber 12 to increase the efficiency of the operation taking place within the dilution treatment chamber 12.

[0055] Thereafter, the selected ~~fine~~ particle [[~~group~~]] exits through the transfer chamber outlet 31 at the bottom of the [[~~inner~~]] transfer chamber ~~30~~ 13 [[~~of the transfer casing 13~~]] after settling, whereas the remaining particle stream [[~~coarse particle group~~]] continues its drop into the dilution treatment chamber 12 toward the dilution treatment chamber outlet 22.

[0056] As mentioned previously, the apparatus 10 of the present invention is usable [[~~can also be used~~]] for simultaneous or separately process and for mixing, [[~~and/or~~]] treating the different components of particle stream, depending on the adjustment of the nozzle 14, the dilution rate and the impact force [[~~particle and/or fluid streams~~]]. Therefore, a processing mixing/treating operation of the apparatus 10 is set forth.

[0057] Referring to Fig. 1, particle [[~~and/or fluid~~]] streams to mix~~/~~ and/or treat [[~~are fed by the conveyor C, and possibly other conveyors or particle and/or fluid sources (not shown) to the apparatus 10. The particle and/or fluid streams~~]] have horizontal and vertical [[~~a lateral~~]] dilution velocity and will accelerate downwardly when leaving their source due to gravitational forces as similarly set for the separate process, just different adjustment will be take place as described previously.

~~[0058]~~ [[~~The slide 53 will absorb a portion of the downward force of the particle and/or fluid streams, and stop the lateral velocity of the particle and/or fluid streams that had been transferred thereto by the action of the conveyor C or other possible source. The particle and/or fluid stream are directed by the slide 53 toward the slide 50~~

~~of the pretreatment module 15, at generally predetermined velocity conditions.~~]]

~~[0059]~~ [[~~Upon reaching the slide 50, the particle and/or fluid streams will be guided by the optional guiding rails 52 (Fig. 2), so as to be conveyed uniformly towards the dilution treatment chamber 12 as a result of the downward slope of the slide 50. The downward slope of the slide 50 will cause the particle and/or fluid streams to accelerate.~~]]

~~[0060]~~ [[~~The deflector 51, having a launch surface, will deflect the particle and/or fluid streams horizontally. A lateral dilution will be the result of the deflection of the particle and/or fluid streams by the deflector 51. Accordingly, the particle and/or fluid streams will reach the dilution treatment chamber 12, having been subjected to a horizontal dilution.~~]]

~~[0061]~~ [[~~The particle and/or fluid streams then falls in the channel 20 of the dilution treatment chamber 12. The gravity will cause a vertical dilution of the particle and/or fluid streams.~~]]

[0058] A first one of the nozzles, namely nozzle 14A, will laterally project treatment fluid jet stream with velocity pressure effect [[~~inject fluid,~~]] or any other suitable fluid or particle jet, within the [[~~channel~~]] passageway 20 of the dilution treatment chamber 12 so as to cause a turbulence, and move in all directions the different components of particle stream for another step of de-cohesion for [[~~a mix,~~]] mixing and/or treating [[~~or a treatment of~~]] the particle and/or fluid streams. The treatment fluid jet stream [[~~fluid/particle injected~~]] projected by the nozzle 14A at a ~~is of~~ predetermined pressure depending of the adjustment of the pressure source and the nozzle gate 41, to produce the different jet stream impact forces through the particle stream to be mixed so as to have a variable effect relative to the size, mass and other characteristics of the particles and/or fluid streams. The nozzle 14A fluid

projects [[~~injects air~~]] treatment fluid, or any other suitable fluid, at high pressure and low volume.

[0059] In option, we can use the opposite transfer apertures [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24 which are not used in the mixing process of the apparatus 10. The nozzles 14B and 14C are optionally used with the opposite transfer aperture [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24 being blocked with the gate 26, so as to create further turbulence, as it is contemplated to provide a plurality of the nozzles 14 to [[~~enhance~~]] create different rate of ~~the~~ mixing of different components of particle [[~~and/or fluid~~]] stream in the dilution treatment chamber [[~~channel~~]] 20, [[~~or for~~]] and treating the different component particle stream by the treatment fluid injected [[~~and/or fluid streams~~]]. Additional nozzles may also be added to the apparatus 10.

[0060] Thereafter, the mix or treated matter, resulting from the mix/treatment of the particle and/or agent stream [[~~fluid streams~~]], continues its drop into the deconcentration [[~~dilution~~]] treatment chamber 12 toward the outlet 22. Also the transfer aperture are use for exiting the mixed or treated particle stream.

ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS OF THE APPARATUS 10

[0061] It is contemplated to provide additional components to the apparatus 10 in order to optimize the separation of the particle stream into particle groups.

[0062] Referring to Figs. 5 and 6, a lateral distributor is generally shown at 60. The lateral distributor 60 is positioned in the transfer chamber 30 of the transfer casing 13. Referring more specifically to Fig. 6 in which all reference numerals are shown to simplify Fig. 5, the lateral distributor 60 is shown defining three upstanding sectors 61, each converging to a segmented outlet portion 62. Each of the sector 61 has a respective collecting surface 63 upon which particles coming from the dilution treatment chamber

12 will be collected. An air flow outlet 64 is provided downstream of the upstanding sectors 61 to allow an appropriate flow of air, that will not impede on the lateral flow of air (or gaseous fluid) out of the lateral outlets 24 of the dilution treatment chamber 12.

[0063] More specifically, the lateral distributor 60 operates with the principle that the distance traveled [[~~by the particles carried in the flow of air from the dilution treatment chamber 12~~]] is a function of the particle size parameters (e.g., surface area, mass). Accordingly, coarser particles will travel a shorter distance than finer ones, whereby the coarser particles will be collected by the upstream sector 61. Therefore, a further particle group separation takes place with the lateral distributor 60. The hence separated particle groups are collected separately at the segmented outlet portion 62.

[0064] Referring to Figs. 3 and 7, recuperation trays 70 are provided below each of the transfer apertures [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24 of the dilution treatment chamber 12. More specifically, it is possible that components of particle stream [[~~particles~~]] that should selectively remain with the dilution treatment chamber 12 are deflected out of the transfer aperture [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24. [[~~It is anticipated that~~]] These [[~~coarser~~]] particles will not travel a long distance out of the transfer aperture [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 24 due to their ~~size~~ mass parameters. Accordingly, the recuperation trays 70 are provided to collect these particles, as they are positioned directly below the apertures 24. These particles are returned to the dilution treatment chamber 12 by the sloping shape of the recuperation trays 70.

[0065] Moreover, the recuperation tray 70 illustrated in Fig. 7 [[~~also effects a~~]] have various configurations also effects a particle separation. More specifically, the recuperation tray 70 ~~as~~ has a first sector 71 and a second

sector 72. The first sector 71 collects the particles that should not have left the dilution treatment chamber 12, whereas the second sector 72 collects rapidly falling particles, of a grade just below that of the particle group remaining within the dilution treatment chamber 12. It is pointed out that the second sector 72 is connected to its own outlet.

[0066] Also, the recuperation tray 70 may be pivotally connected at a bottom edge thereof to the wall of the dilution treatment chamber 12. This would enable adjustment of an angle of the recuperation tray 70 with regard to the vertical, as a function of the particle stream/ [[~~particle group~~]] being selected [[~~separated~~]].

[0067] Fig. ~~12~~ 8 and ~~13~~ 9 illustrate alternatives of the nozzle 14A [[~~for use in the dilution process~~]]. In Fig. 8, an impeller is shown at 80. In Fig. 9, a laterally reciprocating strainer is generally shown at 90. Both these alternatives will cause a dispersion and [[~~horizontal~~]] dilution of the particle stream. Other alternatives include ~~fans~~, electrostatic or magnetic emitters (e.g., in accordance with the type of particles stream being treated), as well as any mechanical or ultrasound system.

[0067.a]. Fig. 11 illustrate a transversal section of the dilution treatment chamber 12, where is detailed the transversal movement of passageway side wall 20, used for adjusting the cross sectional area of the dilution treatment chamber 12.

[0068] It is also contemplated to inject additives to the particle stream being diluted in the dilution treatment chamber 12. For instance, an aperture such as one of the treatment fluid pressure-differential apertures 25 can be used with a suitable injection system (e.g., [[~~blower~~]] pressure source and conduit combination) to inject any kind of treatment agent [[~~color (e.g., in the form of a powder)~~]] to the particle stream being diluted in the dilution

treatment chamber 12, or to particle [[~~groups~~]] being mixed therein.

[0069] It is also contemplated to provide a plurality of the apparatus 10 in series, with a conveying system transporting/conveying the output of an upstream one of the apparatus 10 to a downstream one. Alternatively, a pair (or more) of the apparatus 10 may be positioned in parallel and/or share a common transfer chamber ~~30~~ 13, to collect a specific component of particle stream [[~~particle group~~]]. In such a case, the transfer chamber ~~30~~ 13 could be used to mix a different components of particle stream [[~~particle group~~]] from a first dilution treatment chamber 12 with other components of particle stream [[~~a particle group~~]] of a second dilution treatment chamber 12.

[0070] For instance, referring to Fig. 10, an apparatus in accordance with an alternative embodiment of the present invention is generally shown at 10'. The apparatus 10' is similar to the apparatus 10 of Fig. 1 in that the apparatus 10' has a dilution treatment chamber 12, nozzles 14 (herein four nozzles for the dilution treatment chamber 12), and a pretreatment module 15'. The pretreatment module 15' shows a different shape (e.g., with a conical slide 53'), but operates in a fashion similar to that of the pretreatment module 15. The apparatus 10' has a transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13' in which a secondary separation and/or mix and/or treat is performed.

[0071] More specifically, the transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13' has a transfer plate 100, a dilution treatment chamber 102, nozzles 104, and a second transfer chamber [[~~subcasing~~]] 106. The components of particle stream [[~~particle group~~]] reaching the transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13' from the dilution treatment chamber 12 will drop into the inlet of the dilution treatment chamber 102, or will settle onto the transfer plate 100, to then reach the inlet of the dilution treatment chamber 102.

[0072] Optionally, the transfer plate 100 is provided with a vibrator 108 so as to avoid having particles collect thereon. The transfer plate 100 could also be provided with a low adherence coating, such as PTFE.

[0073] The dilution treatment chamber 102 is illustrated having the nozzles 104A, 104B, and 104C. The nozzle 104A serves the same function as the nozzle 14A of Fig. 1, namely to distribute [[~~break down~~]] the particle stream [[~~group~~]] that has reached the dilution treatment chamber 102. The nozzle 104A can be replaced with other devices, such as those illustrated in Figs. ~~12~~ 8 and ~~13~~ 9.

[0074] The nozzles 104B and 104C serve the same function as the nozzles 14B and 14C of Fig. 1, and are thus positioned opposite the transfer aperture [[~~lateral outlets~~]] 110, through which selected components of particle stream ~~a~~ [[~~particle group~~]] will be forced out, to reach the transfer chamber [[~~subcasing~~]] 106 and settle therein. The removed particle [[~~group~~]] will exit through outlet 112, whereas the remaining particles [[~~group remaining in the dilution treatment chamber 102~~]] will exit through dilution treatment chamber outlet 114. Recuperation trays 116 are adjustable similarly to the recuperation trays 70 of the preferred embodiment.

[0075] Accordingly, the output of the apparatus 10' are ~~is~~ three different components particle groups, with their separated and/or mixed, and/or treated ~~the~~ particle group exiting from the passageway 20, 102, and transfer chamber [[~~subcasing~~]] 106 [[~~being the finest~~]]. It is pointed out that the treatment fluid jet stream [[~~gaseous fluid~~]] output of the nozzles 14 and 104 is adjusted in view of the desired ~~size~~ process of the stream of particles selected [[~~particle groups~~]]. The dilution transfer chamber [[~~casing~~]] 13' [[~~can be~~]] are used for separating, mixing or treating, as described previously for the apparatus 10.

USES

[0076] Amongst the various process that can take place with the apparatus 10-10' of the present invention, it is contemplated to separate, treat, [[~~classify (with an initial step of separation)~~]], mix, add, vaporize, clean, calibrate, or eliminate components [[~~fines~~]] from particle streams. Other treatments, such as painting, coating, sandblasting, ~~or~~ cleaning, and so forth can be effected with the apparatus 10-10' of the present invention. Existing batch processes, such as the injection of gas or chemicals into soft drinks, can be converted to continuous processes using the present invention.

[0077] The differential velocity pressure in the dilution treatment chamber 12 can be controlled electronically and the apparatus 10 may be combined to magnetic, electrical, ultrasound, electronic, and electromagnetic systems.

[0078] The apparatus 10-10' can be used with all kinds of materials, such as: mineral, vegetable, biological, or organic aggregates, as well as with fertilizers, treatment or transformation residues, waste, food products, drugs and other pharmaceutical products, powders, agriculture related products, chemical or metallurgical products, compost, plastics and composites, paper, soil and bio-soil, ashes, crushed stone, ceramics, coal, and any kind of suitable elements.

[0079] The apparatus 10-10' of the present invention is relatively small. Accordingly, it is possible to place the apparatus 10-10' at various parts of a process due to these advantageous features. The apparatus 10-10' enables large quantities of particles/[[~~fluid~~]] streams to be treated in a relatively limited amount of space, with little wear of material, low energy consumption and, in some embodiments, no moving parts (i.e., depending on the choice of the type of dilution).

[0080] The apparatus 10-10′ can be used as part of a multi-step or multi-pass process. [[~~Moreover although,~~]] For instance, the preferred embodiment includes ~~only~~ a transfer chamber 13, 106, [[~~settling cavity~~]] for the collection of the selected particles, [[~~an outflow of air for the particles remaining in suspension can be added as an option~~]]. The apparatus 10-10′ is made of rigid materials, such as metals, polymers, and so forth. It is pointed out that aside from the slide 53, the apparatus 10-10′ goes through limited wear.

[0081] It is within the ambit of the present invention to cover any obvious modifications of the embodiments described herein, provided such modifications fall within the scope of the appended claims.

I CLAIM:

~~1.~~ [[~~An apparatus for separating a particle stream into particle groups, comprising:~~]]

[[~~a dilution treatment chamber defining an upstanding channel having a particle inlet at a top end, and a first particle group outlet at a bottom end, the channel being adapted to receive a particle stream at the particle inlet such that the particle stream falls toward the first particle group outlet;~~]]

[[~~a transfer casing adjacent to the dilution treatment chamber and defining a transfer chamber adapted to receive a second particle group;~~]]

[[~~at least one second particle group outlet laterally positioned with respect to the channel of the dilution treatment chamber and allowing fluid communication between the transfer chamber and the channel;~~]]

[[~~a distributor in the channel between the particle inlet and the at least one second particle group outlet, for breaking down the particle stream and distributing the particle stream over a surface area of the channel; and~~]]

[[~~at least one fluid flow aperture in the dilution treatment chamber and below the distributor, adapted to create a fluid flow between the transfer chamber and the channel so as to entrain a second particle group from the channel through the second particle group outlet to the transfer chamber with a first particle group remaining in the channel for exiting through the first particle group outlet, the apparatus being adapted to be connected to a positive pressure source to create the fluid flow.~~]]

~~2.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a pretreatment module at the particle inlet of the dilution treatment chamber, to guide the particle stream and to cause a horizontal dilution of the particle stream.~~]]

~~3.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the pretreatment module has at least one slide portion sloping~~

~~downwardly toward the particle inlet of the dilution treatment chamber for guiding and accelerating a particle stream to the dilution treatment chamber, and a deflecting surface between the slide and the particle inlet for breaking down the particle stream and for imparting the horizontal dilution to the particle stream.~~]]

~~4.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the fluid flow apertures is used to inject an additive into the first particle group.~~]]

~~5.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the at least one second particle group outlet and the at least one fluid flow aperture are horizontally aligned and on opposite sides of the channel of the dilution treatment chamber.~~]]

~~6.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein a nozzle adapted to be connected to the positive pressure source is connected to the fluid flow aperture so as to inject fluid in the channel to create the fluid flow between the channel and the transfer chamber.~~]]

~~7.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the distributor has an aperture laterally positioned in the channel, and a fluid injection nozzle adapted to be connected to the positive pressure source and connected to the dilution aperture for injecting fluid in the channel of the dilution treatment chamber, for breaking down the particle stream and distributing the particle stream over a surface area of the channel.~~]]

~~8.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the distributor has one of an impeller, an ultrasound system and a reciprocating strainer.~~]]

~~9.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a recuperation tray, positioned out of the~~

~~channel in the transfer chamber and below the second particle group outlet for collecting particles of the first particle group deflected or forced out of the channel by the flow of fluid, and for returning the particles of the first particle group to a remainder of the first particle group.~~]]

~~10.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the transfer casing has an outlet at a bottom end thereof, for collecting the second particle group received in the transfer casing.~~]]

~~11.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the transfer chamber of the transfer casing is segmented into laterally adjacent upstanding receptacles to further separate the second particle group according to the distance over which the particles of the second particle group are entrained by the flow of fluid.~~]]

~~12.~~ [[~~A method for separating a particle stream into particle groups, comprising the steps of:~~]]

[[~~i) vertically diluting the particle stream by directing the particle stream to a falling condition within a channel;~~]]

[[~~ii) breaking down the particle stream by subjecting the particle stream to lateral forces so as to distribute the particle stream over a surface area of the channel;~~]]

[[~~iii) entraining a particle group away from a remainder of the particle stream by creating a fluid flow of predetermined magnitude across the particle stream in said falling condition; and~~]]

[[~~iv) collecting the particle group and the remainder of the particle stream at separate locations.~~]]

~~13.~~ [[~~The method according to claim 12, further comprising a step of horizontally diluting the particle stream by providing a horizontal velocity to the particle stream prior to step i).~~]]

~~14. [[The method according to claim 12, wherein step ii) includes injecting a fluid into the particle stream to break down said mass and distribute the particle stream over the surface area of the channel.]]~~

~~15. [[The method according to claim 12, wherein step iv) includes collecting the particle group into at least two particle subgroups by providing at least two collecting locations for the particle group, so as to collect particles in the subgroups according to a distance of entrainment of the particles.]]~~

~~16. [[An apparatus for at least one of mixing and treating particle and/or fluid streams, comprising:]]~~

~~[[a dilution treatment chamber defining an upstanding channel having an inlet at a top end, and an outlet, the channel being adapted to receive said particle and/or fluid streams at the inlet such that said particle and/or fluid streams fall toward the outlet;]]~~

~~[[at least one fluid flow aperture in the dilution treatment chamber, adapted to create a generally lateral flow of at least one of a fluid and particle jet within the channel to create a turbulence in the channel for at least one of mixing said particle and/or fluid streams and treating said particle and/or fluid streams , whereby a mixture and/or treated matter will exit the channel at the outlet; and]]~~

~~[[a positive pressure source connected to the fluid flow aperture to create the lateral flow of the at least one of the fluid and the particle jet.]]~~

~~17. [[The apparatus according to claim 16, further comprising a particle pretreatment module at the inlet of the dilution treatment chamber, to cause a horizontal dilution of said particle and/or fluid streams.]]~~

~~18. [[The apparatus according to claim 17, wherein the particle pretreatment module has at least one slide portion~~

~~sloping downwardly toward the inlet of the dilution treatment chamber for guiding said particle and/or fluid streams to the dilution treatment chamber, and a deflector surface between the slide and the inlet for breaking down said particle and/or fluid streams and for imparting the horizontal dilution to said particle and/or fluid streams.~~]]

~~19.~~ [[~~The apparatus according to claim 16, wherein a nozzle interconnects the pressure source to the fluid flow aperture so as to create the flow of fluid in the channel.~~]]

~~20.~~ [[~~A method for at least one of treating and mixing particle and/or fluid streams, comprising the steps of:~~]]

[[~~i) vertically diluting particle and/or fluid streams by directing particle and/or fluid streams to a falling condition;~~]]

[[~~ii) creating a lateral flow of fluid and/or a particle jet across the particle and/or fluid streams in said falling condition for at least one of mixing the particle and/or fluid streams by a turbulence resulting from the lateral flow of fluid and/or particle jet, and treating said particle and/or fluid streams; and~~]]

[[~~iii) collecting the mixture and/or treated matter below the lateral flow.~~]]

~~21.~~ [[~~The method according to claim 20, further comprising a step of horizontally diluting the particle and/or fluid streams by providing a horizontal velocity to the particle and/or fluid streams prior to step i).~~]]

22. A method for processing a stream of particles having a cross-sectional area, the stream of particles flowing substantially along a stream flow direction, said method comprising: directing a diluting flow of fluid towards the stream of particles, the diluting flow of fluid flowing substantially along a diluting flow of fluid direction, the diluting flow of fluid having a velocity and density such that the velocity pressure of the fluid

produces a diluting impact force on the particles causing the particles to move in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid, thereby increasing the cross-sectional area of the stream of particles.

23. A method as defined in claim 22, wherein the diluting flow of fluid has a velocity and density such that the fluid produces a diluting impact force on the particles causing the particles to move over a first distance in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid while the fluid produces the diluting impact force and to move over a second distance in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid after the fluid has produced the diluting impact force, the diluting impact force being of a magnitude and a duration such that

- the particles are substantially distanced from each other by the diluting flow of fluid; and
- the second distance is substantially larger than the first distance.

24. A method as defined in claim 23, wherein the diluting flow of fluid is a high velocity pressure jet stream.

25. A method as defined in claim 22, further comprising diluting the stream of particles by accelerating the stream of particles substantially in the stream flow direction after the fluid produces the diluting impact force on the particles.

26. A method as defined in claim 25, wherein the stream flow direction is substantially parallel to a gravitational field in which the stream of particles is accelerated.

27. A method as defined in claim 26, wherein the diluting flow of fluid direction is substantially perpendicular to the stream flow direction.

28. A method as defined in claim 26, wherein the stream of particles includes particles of a first type and particles of a second type, the particles of the first and second types having a mass, a size and a configuration so that they move differently under the influence of aerodynamic forces, said method further comprising directing a separating flow of fluid towards the stream of particles, the separating flow of fluid flowing substantially along a separating flow of fluid direction, the separating flow of fluid being a jet stream having a velocity and density such that the velocity pressure of the separating flow of fluid produces a separating impact force on the particles of the first and second types, the separating impact force being of a magnitude and a duration such that the particles of the first and second types are separated respectively in a first and a second substream of particles, the first substream of particles including a higher proportion of particles of the first type relative to the total number of particles than the proportion of particles of the first type relative to the total number of particles present in the stream of particles, the second substream of particles including a higher proportion of particles of the second type relative to the total number of particles than the proportion of particles of the second type relative to the total number of particles present in the stream of particles.

29. A method as defined in claim 28, wherein the separating impact force on the particles of the second type is such that the separating flow of fluid is substantially stopped by frictional forces before reaching the second substream of particles.

30. A method as defined in claim 29, wherein the velocity, dimensions and density of the separating flow of

fluid are such that substantially no turbulence is caused by the separating flow of fluid in the second substream of particles.

31. A method as defined in claim 30, wherein the second substream of particles includes substantially no particles of the first type and wherein the first susbstream of particles includes substantially no particle of the second type.

32. A method as defined in claim 22, wherein the stream of particles flows in a casing 12, having a casing longitudinal axis, the casing longitudinal axis being substantially parallel to the stream flow direction.

33. A method as defined in claim 32, wherein the force and duration of the diluting impact force is such that turbulence is created in the stream of particles, the turbulence mixing the particles so that the stream of particles is substantially homogeneous downstream from the diluting flow of fluid.

34. A method as defined in claim 22, further comprising:

a. injecting a treatment agent in the flow of fluid; and

b. treating at least in part the particles with the treatment agent.

35. A method as defined in claim 22, wherein the fluid includes a gas.

36. A method as defined in claim 35, wherein the gas includes air.

37. A method as defined in claim 36, wherein the gas consists essentially of air.

38. An apparatus for processing a stream of particles, said apparatus comprising:

c. a substantially upstanding dilution treatment chamber 12, 102, said dilution treatment chamber, defining an upper chamber 21, end and an opposed lower chamber end 22, 114, said dilution treatment chamber having a chamber passageway 20, extending between said upper and lower chamber ends;

d. a source of compressed fluid; and

e. a nozzle 14, 104, for creating a high velocity pressure jet stream, said nozzle including

i. a nozzle inlet 40, in fluid communication with said source of compressed fluid;

ii. a nozzle outlet 41, in fluid communication with said chamber passageway for releasing the jet stream into said chamber passageway; and

iii. a nozzle passageway 43, extending between said nozzle inlet 40, and said nozzle outlet 41.

39. An apparatus as defined in claim 38, wherein the jet stream is a flow of fluid flowing substantially along a flow of fluid direction inside said chamber passageway 20, the flow of fluid having a velocity, a cross-sectional area and density such that the velocity pressure of the fluid produces an impact force on the particles causing the particles to move in a direction substantially parallel to the flow of fluid while the fluid produces the impact force, the particles moving over a first distance in a direction substantially parallel to the flow of fluid while the fluid produces the impact force and moving over a second distance in a direction substantially parallel to the flow of fluid after the fluid has produced the impact force, the impact force being of a magnitude and a duration such that

- the particles are substantially separated from each other by the flow of fluid; and

- the second distance is substantially larger than the first distance

thereby increasing a cross-sectional area of the stream of particles.

40. An apparatus as defined in claim 39, wherein the stream of particles is accelerated by gravity below said nozzle output 41.

41. An apparatus as defined in claim 40, wherein the flow of fluid direction is substantially perpendicular to the stream flow direction.

42. An apparatus as defined in claim 41, wherein the force and duration of the impact force is such that the particles are mixed in the stream of particles so that the stream of particles is substantially homogeneous downstream from the diluting flow of fluid, the particles being mixed by a turbulence created by the flow of fluid in the stream of particles.

43. An apparatus as defined in claim 42, further comprising a treatment fluid source in fluid communication with said nozzle passageway 40, said treatment fluid source allowing to selectively inject in said chamber passageway 20, a treatment fluid for treating at least in part the particles.

44. An apparatus as defined in claim 43, further comprising:

- a transfer chamber 13, 106, positioned substantially adjacent said dilution treatment chamber 12, 102;
- another nozzle including
  - an other nozzle inlet 40, in fluid communication with said source of compressed fluid;

- an other nozzle outlet 41, in fluid communication with said chamber passageway 20; and

- another nozzle passageway 43, extending between said other nozzle inlet and said other nozzle outlet; and

- a transfer aperture 24, 110, extending between said dilution treatment chamber 12, 102, and said transfer chamber 13, 106, said transfer aperture 24, 110, being substantially opposed to said other nozzle output 41, with respect to said transfer chamber 13, 106, said transfer aperture 24, 110, being substantially in register with said other nozzle output 41;

- said other nozzle directing an other jet stream in the form of another flow of fluid coming from said source of compressed fluid towards the stream of particles, the other flow of fluid flowing substantially along an other flow of fluid direction in said chamber passageway 12, 102, the other flow of fluid having a velocity and density such that the velocity pressure of the fluid produces an other impact force on the particles causing the particles to move over an other first distance in a direction substantially parallel to the other flow of fluid while the fluid produces the other impact force and to move over an other second distance in a direction substantially parallel to the other flow of fluid after the fluid has produced the other impact force, the other impact force being of a magnitude and a duration such that

- the particles are substantially separated from each other by the other flow of fluid; and

- the other second distance is substantially larger than the other first distance;

- the other first and second distances are such that at least some particles are projected through said transfer aperture 24, 110, and into said transfer chamber 13, 106, by the other flow of fluid.

45. An apparatus as defined in claim 44, wherein the other flow of fluid produced by the other nozzle 14, 104, has a velocity and a volume such that substantially no turbulence is produced in said transfer chamber 13, 106, by the other flow of fluid.

46. An apparatus as defined in claim 45, further comprising a pre-treatment module 15, 15', provided over said dilution treatment chamber 12, 102, for spreading the stream of particles in a substantially horizontal direction prior to entry in said casing passageway.

47. An apparatus as defined in claim 46, wherein further comprising a distributor 55, selected from the set consisting of impeller, an ultrasound system, and a reciprocating strainer, said distributor 55 being located substantially upstream of said nozzle 14 and distributing the particle stream over a plane substantially perpendicular to the stream flow direction.

48. An apparatus as defined in claim 45, wherein said dilution treatment chamber 12, 102, and said transfer chamber 13, 106, are separated from each other by a wall 23, said transfer aperture 24, 110, being formed into said wall 23.

49. An apparatus as defined in claim 48, further comprising a transfer aperture 24, 110, closing device operable between an open and a closed configuration, wherein

- in said open configuration, said transfer aperture 24, 110, is open so as so allow at least some of the particles and at least part of the flow of fluid to enter the transfer chamber 13, 106; and

- in said closed configuration, said transfer aperture 24, 110, is closed with the gate 26, 206, so as so substantially prevent the particles and the flow of fluid from entering the transfer chamber.

50. An apparatus as defined in claim 44, further comprising at least one recuperation tray 70, located substantially adjacent and below said transfer aperture 24, 110, in said transfer chamber 13, 106, for collecting and returning particles falling there into to said dilution treatment chamber 12, 102.

51. An apparatus as defined in claim 38, wherein said nozzle 14, 104, further includes a diffusing body 44, positioned between said nozzle inlet 40, and said nozzle outlet 41, said diffusing body 44, creating a substantially uniform flow of fluid at said nozzle outlet 41.

52. An apparatus as defined in claim 51, wherein said nozzle 14, 104, includes a gate 45, movable between an open position and a closed position, wherein in said open position, said gate is substantially retracted from said nozzle outlet and in said closed position, said gate substantially covers said nozzle outlet.

53. An apparatus as defined in claim 52, wherein moving said gate 45, at a predetermined position between said open and closed positions controls the cross-sectional area and velocity of the flow of fluid so that the velocity of the flow of fluid is a predetermined velocity and the cross-sectional area of the flow of fluid is a predetermined cross-sectional area.

54. An apparatus as defined in claim 38, wherein said dilution treatment chamber 12, 102, and said transfer chamber 13, 106, are substantially elongated and define respectively a chamber longitudinal axis and a transfer chamber longitudinal axis, said dilution treatment chamber and

transfer chamber longitudinal axes being substantially parallel.

55. An apparatus as defined in claim 54, wherein said dilution treatment chamber 12, 102, is substantially parallelepiped-shaped.

56. An apparatus as defined in claim 54, wherein said transfer chamber 13,106, is substantially parallelepiped-shaped.

57. An apparatus as defined in claim 38, wherein said dilution treatment chamber 12, 102, includes a movable side wall of the passageway 20, movable in a direction substantially parallel to said flow of fluid, said nozzle extending from said movable side wall.

58. An apparatus as defined in claim 38, wherein said source of compressed fluid includes a source of compressed air.

59. An apparatus as defined in claim 38, further comprising a pretreatment module positioned over the dilution treatment chamber, said pre-treatment module guiding and spreading substantially horizontally the stream of particles.

60. An apparatus as defined in claim 59, wherein said pretreatment module 15, 15', has at least one slide portion sloping downwardly toward said dilution treatment chamber 12, for guiding and accelerating the stream of particles towards the dilution treatment chamber 12, 102, and a deflecting surface 51, between said slide portion 50, and said dilution treatment chamber 12, for spreading out substantially horizontally the steam of particles prior to entry in said passageway 20.

61. An apparatus as defined in claim 39, wherein said passageway defines a passageway cross-section, said diluting

flow of fluid distributing the stream of particles over said passageway cross-section.

ABSTRACT

APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR [[~~SEPARATING/MIXING COMPONENTS OF PARTICLE STREAM~~]] PROCESSING A STREAM OF PARTICLES [[~~PARTICLE/FLUIDS~~]]

[[~~An apparatus and method for separating a particle stream into particle groups, comprising a dilution treatment chamber defining an upstanding channel to receive a particle stream, such that the particle stream falls toward a first particle group outlet. A transfer casing is adjacent to the dilution treatment chamber and defines a transfer chamber to receive second particle group. Second particle groups outlets are laterally positioned with respect to the channel and allow fluid communication therebetween. A distributor in the channel is provided to break down the particle stream and to distribute the particle stream over a surface area of the channel. Fluid flow apertures create a fluid flow between the transfer chamber and the channel so as to entrain second particle group to the transfer chamber with a first particle group remaining in the channel for exiting through the first particle group outlet. The apparatus and method is also used to mix/treat particle streams/fluids.~~]] A method and device for processing a stream of particles, the stream of particles flowing substantially along a stream flow direction. The method includes: directing a diluting flow of fluid towards the stream of particles, the diluting flow of fluid flowing substantially along a diluting flow of fluid direction, the diluting flow of fluid having a velocity and density such that the velocity pressure of the fluid produces a diluting impact force on the particles causing the particles to move in a direction substantially parallel to the diluting flow of fluid a method for processing a stream of particles, the stream of particles flowing substantially along a stream flow direction.